

## The Adjective Clause

**4d. An adjective clause is a subordinate clause that modifies a noun or a pronoun.**

An adjective clause usually follows the word or words it modifies and tells *what kind* or *which one*. An **essential** (or **restrictive**) clause is necessary to the basic meaning of the sentence; it is not set off by commas. A **nonessential** (or **nonrestrictive**) clause gives only additional information and is not necessary to the meaning of a sentence; it is set off by commas.

**EXAMPLES** This is the new music video **that I like best**. [The clause *that I like best* is necessary to tell which video is being mentioned. Because this information is essential to the meaning of the sentence, it is not set off by commas.]

Griffins, **which are mythological beasts**, are included on many coats of arms. [The clause *which are mythological beasts* is not necessary to identify *Griffins*. Because this information is nonessential to the meaning of the sentence, it is set off by commas.]

## Relative Pronouns

Adjective clauses are often introduced by relative pronouns.

### Common Relative Pronouns

who, whom, whose, which, that

These words are called **relative pronouns** because they *relate* an adjective clause to the word that the clause modifies. Besides introducing an adjective clause and relating it to another word in the sentence, the relative pronoun has a grammatical function within the adjective clause.

**EXAMPLES** Luís, **who enjoys running**, has decided to enter the marathon. [The relative pronoun *who* relates the adjective clause to *Luís*. *Who* also functions as the subject of the adjective clause.]

The students questioned the data **on which the theory was based**. [The relative pronoun *which* relates the adjective clause to *data* and functions as the object of the preposition *on*.]

We met the singer **whose new CD was released this week**. [The relative pronoun *whose* relates the adjective clause to *singer*. *Whose* functions as a possessive pronoun in the adjective clause.]

### Reference Note

For help in deciding whether a clause is **essential or nonessential**, see page 322.

### Reference Note

For more information on using **who** and **whom** correctly, see page 233. For more about using **that** and **which** correctly, see page 281.

### SKILLS FOCUS

Identify and use relative pronouns. Identify and use adverb clauses.

Janice, **whom I have known for years**, is my lab partner this semester. [The relative pronoun *whom* relates the adjective clause to *Janice*. *Whom* functions as the direct object of the verb phrase *have known* in the adjective clause.]

In many cases, the relative pronoun in the clause may be omitted. The pronoun is understood and still has a function in the clause.

**EXAMPLES** Here is the salad **you ordered**. [The relative pronoun *that* is understood. The pronoun relates the adjective clause to *salad* and functions as the direct object of the verb *ordered* in the adjective clause.]

He is the one **I met yesterday**. [The relative pronoun *whom* or *that* is understood. The pronoun relates the adjective clause to *one* and functions as the direct object of the verb *met* in the adjective clause.]

Occasionally an adjective clause is introduced by the word *where* or *when*. When used in such a way, these words are called **relative adverbs**.

**EXAMPLES** They showed us the stadium **where the game would be held**.

Saturday is the day **when I mow the lawn**.

## Exercise 2 Identifying Adjective Clauses

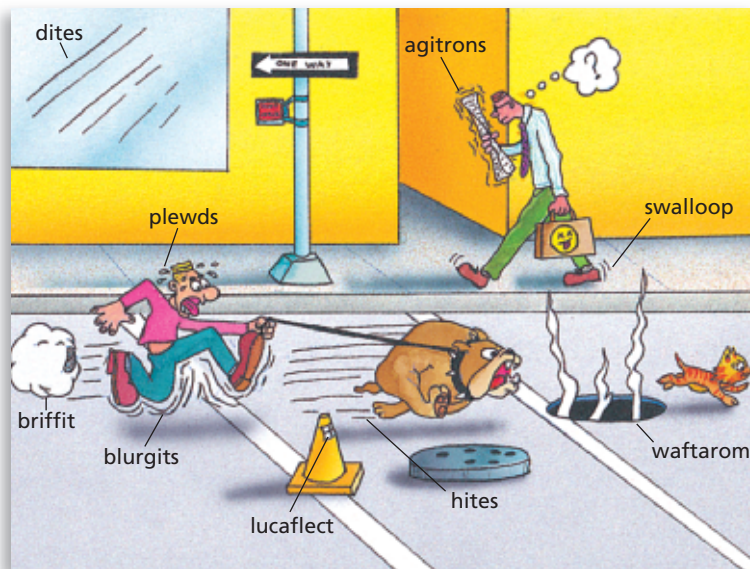
Each of the following sentences contains an adjective clause. Write the adjective clause, and underline the relative pronoun or relative adverb that introduces it. If the relative pronoun has been omitted, write it in parentheses and then underline it.

**EXAMPLE** 1. Do you know anyone who is familiar with briffits, swalloops, and waftaroms?

1. who is familiar with briffits, swalloops, and waftaroms

1. Cartoonists use a variety of unusual names for the symbols that commonly appear in comic strips.
2. For example, a *briffit* is the little puff of dust hanging in the spot where a swiftly departing character was previously standing.
3. For times when cartoonists want to make something appear hot or smelly, they use wavy, rising lines called *waftaroms*.
4. *Agitrons* are the wiggly lines around an object that is supposed to be shaking.

5. The limbs of a character who is moving are usually preceded or trailed by a set of curved lines called *blurgits* or *swalloops*.
6. *Plewds*, which look like flying droplets of sweat, are drawn around the head of a worried character.
7. In fact, there are very few motions or emotions for which cartoonists have not invented a clever, expressive symbol.
8. Almost everyone who likes to doodle and draw has used some of these symbols, probably without knowing the names for them.
9. Look at the example cartoon, where you will find the names of other common symbols from the world of cartooning.
10. Now you know a “language” almost nobody outside the cartooning profession knows!



### Exercise 3 Revising Sentences by Supplying Adjective Clauses

Revise the following sentences by substituting an adjective clause for each italicized adjective. Add specific details to make your sentences interesting. Underline the adjective clauses in your sentences.

- EXAMPLE**
1. The *angry* citizens gathered in front of City Hall.
  1. The citizens, who were furious over the recent tax increase, gathered in front of City Hall.
1. As I entered the building, a *colorful* painting caught my eye.
  2. The *patient* photographer sat on a small ledge all day.
  3. The two attorneys argued all week over the *important* contract.
  4. The team of mountain climbers decided to try to reach the top of the *tallest* peak.
  5. At the assembly, Ms. León made two *surprising* announcements.
  6. Saburo and his friends cautiously entered the *dark* cave.
  7. Edna Jackson easily won her *first* political campaign.